

*The Sin and ill Consequence of speaking Evil of Dignities.*

694.7.4.  
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A  
S E R M O N

Preach'd in the

P A R I S H - C H U R C H

O F

*St. George the Martyr, in Southwark,*

O N

W E D N E S D A Y , J A N U A R Y 30, 1750-1,

Being the Anniversary of the Martyrdom of  
K I N G C H A R L E S I.

Wherein are some Occasional REMARKS on a late seditious  
Libel, called CONSTITUTIONAL QUERIES.

By L. H O W A R D, D. D.

Rector of the said Parish, and CHAPLAIN to his Royal  
Highness the P R I N C E of W A L E S.

*Publish'd at the particular Request of the Audience.*

L O N D O N:

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The 2nd and 3rd Congresses of the British Museum

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The Epistle of St. JUDE, latter Part of the 8th Verse,  
*And speak Evil of Dignities.*

**I**T certainly argues an high Degree of Presumption to censure the Actions of those who move in the upper Spheres of Life, and particularly of those who touch the principal Springs and Wheels that set the grand Machine of Government a going. We see the Actions of the Statesman detach'd; and cannot, as we stand at a great Distance, discern the Relation they bear to others, which must be scan'd with Nicety before we can venture, either with Prudence or good Sense, to pronounce peremptorily upon his Conduct.

A single Action may be seen in many disadvantageous Points of View; it may appear rash, tho' it results from cool Deliberation, and the most unimpeachable Discretion; it may appear unjust, tho' it has been *weigh'd* in the Scales of Justice, and nothing *has been found wanting*; it may seem to have been concerted with some ambitious, interested, or sinister Design, tho' calculated for the true Interests of a Government, and built upon the most solid Principles of Patriotism: The Reason of this is unavoidable, since the Secrecy with which it is necessary that Matters relating to the State and Welfare of a Nation must be conducted, and the labour'd Disguises which they must necessarily wear, in order to escape the Observation of those who are interested to decry a Measure, or to counter-act its Operation and Success, must always prejudice the Appearance of a great Man's Actions, at least in many Instances, and greatly discolour their native and truly genuine Complexion.

The



*Con/* The Conduct of a Man who presides at the Head of Things, and who is actuated by a strong Love of his Country, and who at the same Time is furnished with Abilities to discern remote Dependencies and Annections, resembles in some Measure the Dispensations of Providence, which often appear harsh and severe to short-sighted and misjudging Mortals, and at certain Times are apt to stagger even good Men in their Opinion, that all sublunary Things are under the Management and Controul of Infinite Goodness. But this arises from the very partial Examination which Matters so remote from human Observation must necessarily undergo: Upon the winding up of all Things nothing is more certain, than that the entire Scheme of God's Providence in his Dispensations to Mankind, and all other moral and intelligent Beings, will appear in perfect Beauty, and will afford a most astonishing Display of Wisdom, of Justice, and of Mercy.

From these Observations it appears, that those *who speak Evil of Dignities*, speak Evil of Things which *they know not*, and which they *cannot possibly understand*, and consequently they must stand chargeable with Folly, as well as Presumption. But *there are those* who are actuated by *worse Motives*, and who, notwithstanding they are satisfied of the good Conduct of those in Power, and plainly see the Rectitude and Prudence of their Administration, yet from a Spirit of Faction and Discontent, or from personal Dislikes, or lastly, from Principles of Avarice and Ambition, wilfully and maliciously misinterpret what a candid, impartial, and judicious Examiner would pronounce to be *very good*. Nothing is more common and *easy* than this; tho' nothing can be more *diabolical*: 'Tis *easy* done, since it is scarce possible for an Action to be so incontestably upright, and conducive to the publick Good, but that Ingenuity, when join'd with bad Principles,



ciples, can set it in so disadvantageous a Light, that it may become obnoxious, and be opposed by all the Outrage of popular Commotion. It is *truly diabolical*, the very Name of that wicked one being derived from his Turn for Defamation, having been a *Slanderer and a Liar from the Beginning*.

A Scandal of any Kind, such as affects only People in private Life, is one of the grossest of Crimes, tho' its pernicious Influence spreads itself through a very small Circle, can only touch the Fortunes or Reputation of a single Family, nay possibly only of a single Person: But how must its Malignity be heighten'd, when its Consequences are so extensive as to prejudice the Welfare of a Nation, may not only do the greatest Disservice to the present Generation, but may reach Posterity for Ages to come! Such *Evil-speakers* it is to be hoped will never have it in their Power to overset our excellent Constitution, of which they are such unworthy Members, and from which they enjoy so many Privileges, and such unmerited Protection; but it is certain they too frequently *clog the Wheels of Government and make it drag heavily*.

From such malignant Insinuations as *they* are oftentimes capable of infusing into the Multitude, those who steer the great Vessel of the Nation are sometimes forced to abandon a grand and refined Scheme of Politicks for one that is more popular, one that squares with the contracted Opinions of the short-sighted and misjudging Many. Besides, as Ministers of State are but Men, it is not to be supposed that they will be always possess'd of such undaunted Spirits, or be endow'd with such stubborn Virtue, that being satisfied of the Uprightness of their own Intentions, and convinced of the Prudence and Efficacy of the Plans they have formed, they will run great personal Hazards in the

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Vindication and Support of them; subject themselves to the Fury of an enraged Populace, and risque their Lives and Fortunes to oblige and benefit a thankless Multitude.

Some Men have been too deep-sighted in Politicks, as to perceive and talk of many Advantages arising to the Publick, many proper Checks to an Administration, from the Opposition of a contrary Party: They may be right for aught I know, but certain I am, many Inconveniencies, many Interruptions of the publick Service, many Delays of the Business of a Nation, may also arise from it, and especially if it should proceed only from private and ambitious Views. For how may a Commonwealth suffer all this while! Must not the Wheels of Government stand still, or at least move very slowly, while the Interests or Passions of Individuals clash and interfere in such a Manner? while too opposite Parties are pulling different Ways, and are endeavouring to give the Machine such contrary Motions and Directions?

But However well-meaning Persons may differ in Sentiment, or dislike Measures, their Opposition will be free from any Malice of Heart or Virulence of Expression, and nothing will be handed down to the Populace, which may place those who have acted for their Country to the best of their Judgments, in such a View, as may endanger their Persons, and transmit their Names with undeserved Infamy to Posterity. Nay, may we not pursue these Observations still further, and produce from the Histories of Greece, Rome, and other Nations, Instances of those who having labour'd for the Good of their Country, expos'd themselves to Dangers, and undergone great Inconveniencies to serve



serve those who had entrusted the Management of their public Concerns in their Hands, and not having met with a Treatment suitable to their Deserts ; but having by base and ungenerous Surmises been deemed Enemies to their Country, and contriving to invade its Liberties through some self-interested Views ? I say, may we not produce Instances of Men, who from such Mal-treatment have actually commenced professed Enemies to their Country, who were capable of being the firmest and most serviceable Friends ? Or where Men have not been (as no Man should be) so intemperate in Resentments, but more steady in their Affection to their Country, and not suffered themselves to be drawn from their Duty to it, by any Clamours or Evil-speaking ; where they have nobly and virtuously scorned to act against its Interest, however contumeliously or ungratefully treated ; yet how unable to act vigorously for their Country's Good, how weaken'd in their Effects has such ill Treatment made them ? How many great and valuable Men have been lost to their Country, forced to quit the Stations which they have filled with Honour and Capacity, by reason of the Hazards which themselves and their Families have run, from the Calumnies and popular Odiums which have been artfully and unjustly raised against them ?

Hence we may see the greatest Inconveniences arising to Kingdoms and States, from that Defamation or *Evil-speaking* mentioned in my Text. Men of the best Judgments and most upright Intentions may mistake, in this human State of Fallibility. Between the Formation of a Scheme and its Event, many Changes and Variety of Circumstances may contribute to its Miscarriage; and then what Post of so many Difficulties and Hardships as the Service of the State, if such unavoidable Miscarriages must



must produce such Evil? Who would chuse to be at the *Helm*, did he know the *Coast* ever so well, or how to *steer* with the greatest Judgment and Prudence, if in any unforeseen *Storm*, or little Accident which may happen, every *Passenger* and *common Mariner* in the Vessel should clamour and rise against him?

It cannot be deny'd indeed, but that there have been some who have abused the Trust which their Country has reposed in them, who from self-interested Views have been unattentive to, and perhaps artfully and industriously have struck at, the Liberties and Privileges of those they were designed to defend: But it is to be hoped, that Instances of such monstrous Wickedness, and such Abuse of Confidence, are more rare than some People are ready to surmise. When it plainly appears from *Facts*, and not from *Suggestion* only, that iniquitous and destructive Measures are carrying on, and are growing ripe for Execution, 'tis Time to take the Alarm; and well does that Man deserve of his Country, who opposes himself to the Torrent, and endeavours to open the Eyes of his Fellow Subjects, by a severe Exposure of what with so much Reason is apprehended to lead to pernicious and fatal Issues. But here no private Passion should intermix itself; the whole should be dictated by a generous Jealousy and an honest Concern for the Public Good.

When a Government is form'd on such a Plan as by Reason and Experience is found to be very good; which secures the Lives, Reputations and Properties of those who live under it, in the most effectual Manner, and restrains the natural Rights and Liberties of Mankind, as little as is consistent with the Order, Decency, and Beauty of a Commonwealth, we cannot be too zealous to support it, nor keep too watchful an Eye on those



those who seem disposed to innovate, and to new model the Constitution. But I fear in general, that there are many who in quarrelling with Measures masque their *Dislikes* to the Government they live under; and if they are of *Figure* indulge private Resentment, or propose the serving of some private Interest. What else can set those People to work (besides the Motives just mention'd) who propose **QUERIES TO THE PUBLICK CONSIDERATION**, and point out *Dangers*, the *real Apprehensions* of which can subsist only in a distemper'd Imagination.

When a *Man* has in *numberless Instances* shewn himself a *Friend to his Country*, has *frequently exposed his Life* for the Security and Support of the *present happy Establishment*; who never appear'd to *court popular Applause* for its own Sake, but has only received it as the *natural and unavoidable* Result of Atchievements highly beneficial, and which can never be thought of by any true *Briton*, and sincere Lover of Liberty and his Country, without the deepest Impressions of *Gratitude* and *Regard*; when such a one, I say, is surmised to be capable of entertaining Designs of overturning what *he* has shewn so active a Zeal to defend and secure; what can such Insinuations proceed from (if not from a diseas'd Brain) but from a Heart thoroughly malignant, the Property of *some one* who is eminently *presumptuous*, who is not only *not afraid* but is industrious and fond to *speak Evil of Dignities*? Such a one may pretend to be a *Friend*, but is in Reality an *Enemy* to his Country; not only by endeavouring to damp *rising Merit*, which must be fearful of exerting *itself*, when it is in Danger of operating so much to the Disadvantage of its Owner; but likewise by tainting the Minds of the People with Jealousies and Suspicions, which must necessarily obstruct such good Effects as (it may be supposed) would flow from a

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generous Confidence, which both enables and prompts a Man to exert himself vigorously in the Service of his King and Country.

Men have often spoke Evil of *Power* for no other Reason than its Oblevance of *strict and necessary Discipline*, \* and laying proper Injunctions upon those under it to perform *diligently* the Duties of their Station: There are many who love to be plumed with the *Titles* and enjoy the *Profits* of a Profession, but cannot relish the *Confinements* and *Fatigues* of it; and if they happen to be in such *Condition of Life* as to *promise* themselves, and are unexpectedly *disappointed* of improper Indulgencies, immediately vent their *private* Piques and Resentments in *publick* Abuses and evil *Speeches of Dignities*.

It were much to be wished that Practices so pernicious, that a licentious Use of the Pen or Tongue were not so fashionable, and that, agreeably to the Apostle's Design in this Epistle, we would keep ourselves from, or recover ourselves out of their Snares and Devices, whom he calls *Murmurers, Complainers, whose Mouths speak great swelling Words*; and who out of *Envy*, that inward Malignity of Soul, *despise Dominion* and traduce Superiors. ENVY is a Vice which has various Ways of shedding its Venom, and whose Object is always that *Greatness* which it cannot bear in another's Possession. Like a Pirate, it arms against every one *richly freighted*, if I may so speak, with *Honours and Dignities*, and always meets Men on the *High-sea* of Prosperity with its

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\* Nature makes few Men valiant, it is good Institution and Discipline. VEG. Exercise and good Manners both necessary in an Army, and the Effect of Discipline. CHAR.

Exercitus Labore proficit, Otio consenescit. Id.

Degenerat a Labore ac Virtute Miles assuetudine Voluptatum. TACIT.

Hæc sunt bonæ Militiæ, velle, vereri, obedire. CHAR.



its distinguishing *black Ensign* of slaughtering *Calumny* and *Detraction*.

They can have little Knowledge of the Religion they profess, and are unworthy the Society of moral Beings, whose *Tongues* are such evil and *unruly Members*, under whose *Lips* is the *Poison of Asps*, whose *Throats* are open *Sepulchres* for the Incautious and Unwary, and to bury as it were alive their hated Brethren and Fellow-Creatures. It is a Pity that *Abuse* and *Scurrility* should have ever changed their Quarters, and left their Residence amongst the *vulgar Crowd*; but *evil Speaking* is now grown one of the Vices in Taste, and tho' by *Family* and *Fortune* Men are placed on a *high Ascent* themselves, yet they let fly their *Arrows* even *bitter Words* against the *higher Hill* in their View, in order to climb that Ascent by the Fall and Disgrace of those that are upon it.

When a Pamphlet or Speech is crowded with the *Smartness*, I would rather call it *Bitterness* of Satire, it is read or heard with particular Pleasure and Attention; but nothing upon the *defensive* can be approved of; *Scandal* gets Ground daily of its opposite Vice *Flattery*, nor indeed will any just Encomium upon Merit be pleasing; like a Sermon, or religious Treatise, every Thing to another's Advantage is thrown by and disregarded, but *Scandal* brings much Gain to its Editors and Masters; few *Pieces* are commended without some Gall or Ill-nature; nor can the greatest Eloquence and Rhetoric give Satisfaction, if they want that pleasing and popular Sting of *Detraction* and *Ridicule*. Tho' most Men are without our Saviour's Qualification *to cast a Stone* at another, yet the thicker they fly, the more Sport and Entertainment.

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This is a vitiated Appetite, a very unchristian Sentiment, but Experience unhappily proves it the Temper and Disposition of the World. Servile Flattery may gain and catch its few, but a whole degenerate Age patronizes Scandal. Our Daily Papers, published and licensed to inform and amuse Mankind in the Cares and Business of Life, are become the Vehicles of Slander and Abuse, and are seldom without their mischievous Inuendo's, and cruel Stabs of Mens Credit and Characters; they not only expose the Bad but calumniate the Innocent; and Power and Dignity are their chief Butts to shoot at; by reason whereof one of the most necessary and glorious Liberties of this happy and free Country is abused and prostituted to the vilest Ends and Purposes.

Evil Speaking is a most barbarous and cruel Attempt against another, and a Violation of Humanity itself; the Sword of the Tongue wounds deep; and keen and ill-natur'd Expressions pierce to the very Heart of Man; in which Sense a great Writer \* persuades those who reproach others to lay down their Arms, their Slings and Spears, even their Tongues, by which they do Mischief and are applauded, and which are readier at Hand than any other Weapons.

But what is worst of all; when evil Speaking is directed against Government, it often becomes the Parent of Violence, popular Commotion and Rebellion; it gives Birth to Tumults and civil Wars, and prepares the Way for national Ruin and Distress; it has been observed to put Mens Heads and Hearts upon contriving the most fierce and daring Enterprizes, it has made their Hands forward and their Feet swift to shed Blood, and

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\* Nazan. Ep.



and caused Weapons of Death to stick fast in the Bowels of the Commonwealth.

Calumny has kindled all the Flames in Kingdoms, \* and has fet Princes and their People at a fatal Distance. And this naturally leads me to that tragical Scene of Rebellion and Murder, which we are now assembled to commemorate and bewail; when many *evil Speeches of Dignities* were utter'd, before that *great Rebellion* arrived to its horrid Catastrophe, and *sharpened the Ax* for its bloody Office; an Office which unnaturally and illegally sever'd that pious King from his People, destroyed Monarchy, that best Form of Government, and by depriving the *Members* of the Community of their proper Head, rendered the *Body* politick very monstrous and deformed.

It must be confessed, from the most impartial Histories of those Times, that many *well-designing* Men disagreed with Measures, were fearful of Arbitrary Power, and a dangerous Stretch of the Prerogative; had some Dissatisfactions and Uneasinesses, and were desirous to bring the *Throne*, which perhaps they might think *imposed upon* and *ill-advised*, into the proper Notions and Distinctions of a *limited* Monarchy. With such Principles of Patriotism, and zealously tenacious of their Rights and Liberties, They set out; but left those bold and blood-thirsty Men as soon as they discover'd the Extravagance and Cruelty of their Scheme; and it was owing to the Infatuation of *Enthusiasm*, to a Departure of *Reason* from their *Politicks*, to a *Zeal* that had burst its Orb, and to a Want of *adding to their Knowledge Temperance*, that *one Hand* of any Eminence was left to sign their infamous and treasonable Warrant of Execution.

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\* Lipsius Or. de Calumnia.



Let this Blot in our Annals be a Check to the Presumption and Licentiousness of these Times; let us value ourselves that we are *Free-born*, but let us not make *Liberty* a Handle to commit the Evil in my Text, which brought about the Evil of this Day, nor use it as a *Cloak of Maliciousness*, but as the *Servants of God*; let us *fear him*, and *honour our King*, that great Prince whom his good Providence has set over us; the Mildness of whose Administration, and whose unwearied Endeavours in the *common Cause*, and for the *publick Good*, must endear him to his People.

Let our Prayers for his long and happy Reign be constant and sincere, and let them reach to every Branch of his illustrious Family, to *that Prince* and *Heir Apparent* of his Crown, from whose Goodness of Heart, Affability and Generosity, and from whose numerous and royal Issue, bred up in his Sentiments of Honour and Virtue, our *Protestant Church* and Kingdoms have the greatest Hopes and Security. Let our Prayers and grateful Acknowledgments be never wanting to his *royal Brother* and *brave Prince*, by whose Courage, Conduct, and victorious Arm at *Culloden*, we owe under God the Defeat of the late *Popish* and unnatural Rebellion; who in the most inclement Season, and by the most toilsome Marches, pursued that black Host of Rebels, and delivered us from their bold and wicked Attempts: That *memorable Day*, that filial Affection to a King and a Father, and that warm Heart and active Hand in his Country's Cause, can never be forgot whilst the least Gratitude remains in this Country.

To conclude, let us all pray for and seek the *Peace of our Jerusalem*, they shall prosper that love her; let us be subject, as we ought,



ought, to *higher Powers*, and meddle not with them who would turn *Religion* into *Rebellion*, and *Faith* into *Faction*; let us all have that *Charity* which *envyeth not*, which *thinketh no Evil*, which never *behaveth itself unseemly*, and will finally bring us to the blessed *Regions of everlasting Love, Harmony, and Peace*.

**F I N I S.**

*Page 7. l. 16. for Effects read Efforts.*



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FINIS

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